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TAGS: [KUNR](#) [ACABQ](#) [AMGT](#) [UNGA](#)
SUBJECT: STRATEGY ON UN HARMONIZATION AND SPECIAL
INCENTIVES FOR UNAMA

REF: USUN NEW YORK 00362

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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11. (C) This is an action request. See para 8.

12. (C) Summary: USUN proposes to employ a two-track approach to reaching an agreement on harmonization of conditions of service for UN field staff. One track is to seek concurrence of member states, particularly the G-77, on the harmonization package at issue last March (the March Package), on the condition that the costs would be absorbed in the current budget and financed in future years out of savings. The second track is to determine if, in the absence of full no-cost funding of the March Package, we can accept that package and, if not, present alternative options for harmonization. Concurrent with this two-track approach on harmonization, USUN proposes to support the SYG's proposed special incentive package for the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), pending implementation of harmonization proposals. End summary.

13. (U) During its March resumed session, the Fifth Committee considered the SYG's proposal to streamline UN hiring mechanisms and harmonize conditions of service, i.e., benefits and allowances, for field staff. A modified package was eventually proposed (the March Package) which would have taken effect in July of 2009. Initially, the USG and Government of Japan (GOJ) supported to some degree by Russia and Switzerland, raised concerns regarding the long-term financial implications of the proposal and the absence of alternative options. In the end, the Committee failed to reach consensus on the proposal because of the refusal of the USG and GOJ to join consensus, and deferring further action until the Fall session (Reftel).

14. (SBU) While the Committee was meeting, USUN informally negotiated a proposal with the SYG's office and the USYG for Management, to accept the March Package, on the condition that the initial costs of implementation for the remainder of the biennium would be absorbed and the costs for future years would be funded by savings. The proposal was presented informally to the Group of 77 but was rejected. Some members of G-77 indicated that the rejection was based on the desire to avoid setting a precedent for funding reforms out of savings.

15. (C) USUN now intends to engage G-77 member states, as well as Japan, Germany, and other states to pursue no-cost funding of the March Package, with the understanding that it would be incumbent upon the Secretariat in the first instance to identify savings to cover the cost of harmonization in future budgets. The membership would either have to approve of such proposed savings or identify alternative savings.

¶6. (U) Concurrent with this no-cost approach, USUN will work with the Department to examine the March package to determine definitively whether it is acceptable and, if not, develop concrete proposals (Reftel). If USUN is not successful in achieving agreement on no-cost funding of the March Package, USUN will present USG proposals for harmonizing conditions of service in the Fall session, or sooner if circumstances permit.

¶7. (U) Independent of this two-track approach to harmonization of conditions, USUN proposes to support the SYG's proposal for a Special Afghanistan Allowance (SAA), to assist UNAMA in overcoming serious difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified professional staff that are jeopardizing the success of the mission. Last November the SYG asked the ACABQ to approve the SAA, which was similar to what had been approved in 2005 for the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). The ACABQ declined to approve the SAA, expressing concern for the precedent such action might create, while emphasizing that the Committee would soon be considering proposals for harmonization of benefits (Reftel). USUN proposes to work with the Secretariat and Member States, as appropriate, to maximize the prospects for approval of the SAA. (NB: If we secure agreement in May with the G-77 on an overall harmonization package, the SSA for UNAMA would not be necessary.)

¶8. (U) Unless USUN hears otherwise, USUN will proceed in this two-track approach to harmonization while concurrently seeking approval for a SSA.

Khalilzad